

'Woolf' remake knocking on Warner Bros. door?

"Not a scintilla of truth!" is what we were told about the following, but I'm going to discuss it anyway, because these days I'm getting better stuff from my readers than the usual sources.

"Dear Liz: The rumor running around the Warner Bros. lot is that they're planning a remake of 'Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?' with Jack Nicholson, Susan Sarandon, Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman, to be directed by either Paul Verhoeven or Adrian Lyne. Bring on the color version!"



(and seems to prefer female victims) ... and now, another "Bram Stoker's Dracula" has popped up!

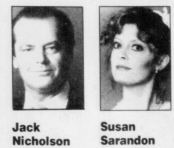
Some of you may remember that back in early 1974, Dan Curtis — the man who brought us "Winds of War," "War and Remembrance" and, of course, "Dark Shadows" — presented a television movie called "Bram Stoker's Dracula" starring Jack Palance. It had originally been scheduled to air some months previously, in October of 1973 — the very night Vice President Spiro Agnew announced his resignation. (There was much talk about stakes plunging through hearts the evening among Carter production staff.) So Dan's lavish vampire tale had the ground cut from under it, so to speak. When it finally was broadcast, this "Dracula" received terrific reviews, along with raves for the Palance performance.

Now, this Dan Curtis labor of love, which hasn't been seen since a TV outing in 1976, will be reshown from 8 to 10 p.m. by CBS on Saturday.

Director/producer Curtis just completed production on his latest work — a non-sexy movie, "Taking Gary Feldman." This stars Danny Aiello, Cathy Moriarty, Anita Morris and David Dukes.

Diana, Princess of Wales, and Fergie, the (just barely) Duchess of York, are royally served up via the Star tabloid's special issue, "Diana and Fergie," which is on the newsstands. Complete with revealing photos and breathless, deathless prose, this collector's item contains everything you — or any self-respecting, gossip-loving Royalophile — will ever need to know about them.

But wait, there's more: Robin Leach and "Good Morning America's" Chantal co-host a two-hour special, "The Royal Family in Crisis," live from London on Dec. 8. Highlights surely will be "untold family secrets" from Diana's step-grandmother, romance novelist Barbara Cartland, and the first on-camera interview with Diana's astrologer, Penny Thorn-ton. I bet Diana would love to just get away from it all with a little stroll across London Bridge. Particularly since London Bridge is now in Arizona.



Now, just to refresh your movie memory, this means Nicholson and Sarandon would play George and Martha, the roles originally essayed by Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor. Tom and Nicole would play Nick and Honey, the hapless "guests" who were portrayed by George Segal and Sandy Dennis.

Warner's, I repeat, says there's just no truth to it. Too bad, I say.

Things that make you go, Hmmm! David Ehrenstein of The Advocate is a black movie critic — the only black movie critic who writes for a national publication. And David Ehrenstein is one of the very few journalists, black or white, who was not allowed into Spike Lee's presence to talk about "Malcolm X."

Oh, David Ehrenstein is also gay. Did I forget to mention that?

"Mitigating circumstances." Dutton's new courtroom thriller from writer Nancy Taylor Rosenberg, has been snapped up by TriStar for big-screen treatment. Jay Presson Allen will script it, and Jonathan Demme is slated to direct.

There's nothing but talk about the new super-hit, Francis Ford Coppola's "Bram Stoker's Dracula." Now, other vampire movies have begun to re-emerge from their celluloid tombs. All of Lugosi's old stuff ... Christopher Lee's incarnations ... the 1960 cult classic "Dracula's Daughter," in which Gloria Holden portrays a desperately unhappy vampire who even seeks psychiatric help

Tim Russert's aim: Press politicians' buttons

BY FLAZHER MOORE
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — You wouldn't say the camera exactly loves "Meet the Press" moderator Tim Russert. But they've become pals.

"The fact that I don't look like a typical TV person probably underscores my credibility," he says. "I hope so."

This newsman's pleasant, beefy appearance is less that of an emerging star than a big cartoon pooch who lives to chase the neighbor's cat. Aptly, Russert goes after Washington's power elite with his own brand of zesty doggeness every week.

At NBC's Washington headquarters on a recent Sunday morning, "Meet the Press" has just signed off. After bidding good day to his panelists David Broder of the Washington Post and Robert Novak of the Chicago Sun-Times, Russert heads for his office, clearly pleased with how the hour went.

His mission, he says, is "to hold the politicians' feet to the fire and, in the course of that, make some news."

This morning, he seems to have done a bit of both during an exchange with Bob Dole, the powerful Senate minority leader who looms as a tough opponent to the incoming Clinton administration.

Russert asked, "Will Bob Dole be a candidate for president in 1996?"

Dole, 1,300 miles away in his hometown of Russell, Kan., coughed out a pre-emptory chuckle. Then he went on to say it's too early to tell.

Russert. "But you're keeping the door open."

Dole. "Never close any doors."

They danced another round, then Russert put it this way: "Senator, you're 69 years old. If you were 59 this morning, would you have any doubt about being a candidate in '96?"

"Not much," said Dole, and everyone laughed.

"I think it was important for the American people to learn this morning that Dole himself is thinking of running for president," Russert says afterward. "Every time he is in a position to obstruct something that Clinton wants to do, it may not be just a minority leader trying to represent his party — he also may have some personal mission."

If Russert thinks like a pol, good reason. An attorney, the Buffalo native served as counselor to New York Gov. Mario Cuomo and as chief of staff for U.S. Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan, a Democrat from New York.

Then, in 1984, Russert came to NBC News as the executive in charge of the "Today" show. Three years ago, he moved to Washington as NBC's bureau chief and a senior vice president.

Russert had plenty to do, but even on his day off, his passion for politics spirited him back to work. He had to be there for "Meet the Press" (at 8:30 a.m. on WMAQ Channel 5).

After coaching from the sidelines a few months, Russert went into the game when a slot on the "MTP" panel needed filling. Then, last December, moderator Garrick Utley took a New York-based assignment and left the show.

Much to his surprise, Russert insists, and in perhaps the sole case of a network exec going public as regular on-air talent, this broadcasting neophyte was handed the "Meet the Press" torch. He's been using it to sing his guests' toadies ever since.

Under his stewardship, the program has expanded to an hour and, recently, marked its 43rd anniversary — three years older than its host.

Although "Meet the Press" remains second to ABC rival "This Week With David Brinkley" in the national ratings, in the important New York and Washington markets, Russert comes out on top.

"Where do I go from here? Nowhere, I hope," says Russert, who also serves as on-air analyst for NBC's political coverage. "I would like to be running the bureau through another presidential election cycle."

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Louise Mandrell — Could she be country's Paula Abdul?

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Louise Mandrell drinks vitamin-fortified juices before shows to give her energy. She also avoids eating for six hours before the curtain rises so she doesn't get lethargic come showtime.

"It's like a jogger getting ready for a run," Mandrell said.

So the doughnut she ate during a recent interview in her palatial lakeside home seemed a bit misplaced.

What's not misplaced, however, is her solidified standing in the formidable lineup of Mandrell talent.

Her sister, Barbara, has always been regarded as the wholesome superstar, the leader, sister Irene, who portrays a dippy telephone operator on "Hee Haw," is the comedic one.

Louise Mandrell performs periodically in a new 4,000-seat theater in the country music hotbed of Branson, Mo. When not there, she's entertaining across America in a high-energy family show with glitz.

Her shows have prompted some to call her a country Paula Abdul.

"I love her but I'd never put myself in her category," Mandrell said. "She's an unbelievable dancer."

The 38-year-old Mandrell has performed onstage since her teenage years when she worked on the Grand Ole Opry as a backup singer and played bass guitar in sister Barbara's band.

She has toured and recorded with Merle Haggard and did six albums of her own for RCA. She once sang a duet with rocker Eric Carmen, "As Long as We've Got Each Other."

She and her sisters were stars on the variety show "Barbara Mandrell and the Mandrell Sisters" on NBC from 1980 to 1982. The program has been in reruns recently on cable TV's The Nashville Network.

Elsewhere on television, Mandrell has run the gamut from "The Tonight Show" to "Another World" to "Hee Haw" to shampoo commercials.

The breakthrough was appearing with her sisters on network TV when country music was just beginning to reach the mass appeal it now enjoys.

"If I'd had an audition, I wouldn't have made the show," she said. "But I was Barbara's sister and I was perfect for the part."

From there, she moved to Las Vegas showrooms. Then she wrote, produced and performed the musical "Love My Country" for a year at Nashville's Opryland USA.

COOKE: Cooke bids farewell

Continued from Page 1

who stars as Jeeves in "Masterpiece Theatre's" "Jeeves and Wooster," will introduce the new series of P.G. Wodehouse stories that begins Dec. 27.

After Cooke's farewell comments Sunday, WTTW Channel 11 will broadcast a two-hour "Alistair Cooke Farewell Salute," beginning at 10:04 p.m. The program, which will include testimonials and program clips, sounds like the sort of overblown, gushy tribute that is the antithesis of Cooke's crisp, analytical program introductions. Better, I think, would be the brief and touching salutation favored by Dabney Coleman's Bill Bittinger on the late, great sitcom "Buffalo Bill." A simple "Ciao, baby!" should suffice.

These are very, very big shoes to fill," said Rebecca Eaton, "Masterpiece Theatre's" executive producer. "He (Cooke) has defined years, but for many people, he has defined PBS."

A new host has not yet been selected. In the meantime, Stephen Fry,

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